

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 ACDA-05 /056 W

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O R 170845Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6087

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 2009

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, KS

SUBJECT: ASSEMBLY INTERPELLATIONS FOCUS ON MYONGDONG INCIDENT

REF: SEOUL 1932 (DTG 160500Z MAR 76)

SUMMARY:

DURING NATIONAL ASSEMBLY INTERPELLATIONS NDP HAS TAKEN
ROKG TO TASK FOR MISHANDLING MARCH 1 MYONGDONG INCIDENT
BY TREATING WHAT NDP SEES AS SIMPLE EXPRESSION OF DEMOCRATIC
HOPE AS A PLOT TO UNSEAT GOVERNMENT. ACCORDING TO
OPPOSITION THIS HAS RESULTED IN AN INTERNATIONAL BLACK EYE
FOR ROKG AND NEW PRIME MINISTER SHOULD RESIGN TO TAKE
BLAME. GOVERNMENT POSITION IS THAT DECLARATION
WAS MISUSE OF RELIGIOUS SERVICE FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES,
WAS A VIOLATION OF EMERGENCY MEASURE NINE, HAS AIDED
COMMUNIST PROPOGANDA, ANS WAS HARMFUL TO NATION; PRIME
MINISTER INSISTS CASE WILL BE HANDLED UNDER LAW.
END SUMMARY.

1. YUCHONGHOE ASSEMBLYMAN YI TO-SON BEGAIN FIRST DAY'S

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INTERPELLATIONS MARCH 16 BY PROVIDEING GOVT. MINISTERS QUESTIONS

TAILOR MADE FOR ANSWERES IN SUPPORT OF ROKG LINE ON MARCH 1 INCIDENT. YI STATED INCIDENT UNDERMINED NATIONAL UNITY, DAMAGED NATIONAL INTEREST AND CREATED FALSE IMPRESSION ABROAD CONCERNING KOREA; HE ASKED GOVT. WHAT STEPMPS WOULD BE TAKEN TO PROTECT MAJORITY OF INNOCENT RELIGIOUS PEOPLE FROM MANIPULATION BY DISSIDENTS.

2. SPEAKING FOR OPPOSITION NDP ASSEMBLYMAN KIM SU-HAN TOOK ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT TACK, QUESTIONING BOTH GOVERNMENT'S INTERPRETATION AND HANDLING OF INCIDENT. KIM ASKED GOVERNMENT CRITICAL AND TOUCH QUESTIONS, ALTHOUGH HE WAS CAREFUL TO KEEP HIS TONE MODERATE AND TO NOT DIRECTLY CHALLENGE LEGITIMACY OF REGIME. KIM ASKED GOVT. TO CONCEDE THAT DECLARATION WAS RESULT OF POPULAR FRUSTRATION OVER PROLONGED IMPLEMENTATION OF PRESS CENSORSHIP AND EMBERGENCY MEASURE 9. HE ARGUED THAT TEXT OF DECLARATION DOES NOT SUPPORT PROSECUTOR'S CONTENTION THAT SIGNERS DESIRED TO INSTIGATE AN UPRISING. KIM ALSO ASKED REASON FOR TEN DAY DELAY IN ROKG PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF INCIDENT AND ARRESTS.

3. PRIME MINISTER CHOE KYU-HA RESPONDED TO QUESTIONS BY BRANDING MARCH 1 DECLARATION AS VIOLATION OF EMERGENCY MEASURE 9 AND MISUSE OF RELIGIOUS CEREMONY FOR POLITICAL PURPOSE IN VIOLATION OF THE CONSTITUTION; HE SAID VIOLATION WOULD BE DEALT WITH UNDER LAW. CHOE ADDED HE WOULD NOT RECOMMEND WITHDRAWAL OF EMERGENCY MEASURE NINE AT THIS TIME. MINISTER OF JUSTICE HWANG SAN-TOK ADDED THAT NORTH HAD INCREASED PROPOGANDA BECAUSE OF MARCH 1 INCIDENT. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT ORGANIZERS OF DECLARATION HAD NOTIFIED FOREIGN NEWSMEN IN ADVANCE OF MARCH 1 AND WARNED THAT THOSE WHO "MISLEAD" FOREIGN NEWS MEDIA WILL BE SEVERLY PUNISHED.

4. MARCH 17 INTERPELLATIONS CONTINUED TO HIGHLIGHT MARCH 1 DECLARATION, BUT WITH ADDITIONAL FIREWORKS. NDP SPOKESMAN HAN PYONG-CHAE TAKING SIGHTLY HARDER LINE THAN HAD KIM SU-HAN ARGUED THAT PROBLEM FOR ROK AROSE NOT FROM MARCH 1 DECLARATION WHICH WAS MODERATE EXPRESSION OF NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC DESIRES AND WAS IN NO WAY A CALL

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FOR UPRISING, BUT FROM ROKG HANDLING OF CASE WHICH RESULTED IN UNPRECEDENTED BAD PUBLICITY FOR THE NATION. CITING NUMEROUS INSTANCES OF ADVERSE FOREIGN PUBLICITY RESULTING FROM MISHANDLING OF INCIDENT AS WELL AS OVERALL DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION, HAN DEMANDED RESIGNATION OF PRIME-MINISTER. HAN WENT ON TO SAY IF IT CAME TO SHOWDOWN WITH COMMUNISTS IT WOULD BE DOMOCRATS AND RELIGIOUS PERSONS WHO WOULD LEAD THE FIGHT. AT THIS POINT YUCHONGHOE

ASSEMBLYMAN HONG PYONG-CHOL SHOUTED "SEND THAT GUY TO VIETNAM" PLUNGING ASSEMBLY INTO CONFUSION AND ENDING HAN'S INTERPELLATION.

5. PRIME MINISTER CHOE'S ANSWERS ON SECOND DAY WERE ESSENTIALLY RESTATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT POSITION. CHOE SUMMED UP BY SAYING THAT THE ULTIMATE FREEDOM IS TO PREVENT WAR AND DETER NORTH KOREAN ATTACK. TO THIS END HE PRAISED PRESIDENT PAK FOR SUCCESS IN DEFENDING COUNTRY, DEVELOPING ECONOMY, AND IMPLANTING SELF CONFIDENCE IN MINDS OF PEOPLE.

6. IN ADDITION TO MYONGDONG INCIDENT NDP ASSEMBLYMEN ON BOTH DAYS OF INTERPELLATIONS ASKED FOR INFORMATION ABOUT FRASER HEARINGS CONCERNING KCIA ACTIVITIES IN U.S. AND ON REPORTS OF A "CERTAIN GOVERNMENT ASSEMBLYMAN" WHO HAD OFFERED BRIBES TO INFLUENCE U.S. ELECTIONS. HAN PYONG-CHAE TERMED THIS A "SHAME FOR MY COUNTRY." ON SECOND DAY OF QUESTIONING ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER NO SIN-YONG REPLIED THAT ROKG AWARE OF REPORTS AND IS MAKING INQUIRIES. HOWEVER, NO SAID THAT INFORMATION OBTAINED SO FAR DOES NOT SUPPORT ALLEGATIONS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, POLITICAL SITUATION, RELIGIOUS GROUPS, DISSIDENT FACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 MAR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: BoyleJA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976SEOUL02009
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760100-0643
From: SEOUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760351/aaaabstp.tel
Line Count: 138
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 SEOUL 1932
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: BoyleJA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 FEB 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 FEB 2004 by morefirh>; APPROVED <21 SEP 2004 by BoyleJA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ASSEMBLY INTERPELLATIONS FOCUS ON MYONGDONG INCIDENT
TAGS: PINT, KS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006